(b) if so, the names of the countries visited by him;

(c) the nature of talks held with those Governments; and

(d) whether any agreement has been made and if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) External Affairs Minister Shri N. D. Tiwari visited Czechoslovakia from 30-3-87 to 1-4-87 and Poland from 2-4-87 to 5-4-87.

(c) In Czechoslovakia EAM had meetings with President Husak, Prime Minister Streugal, Chairman of the Federal Assembly, Mr. Alois Indra, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Mr. Vasil Bilak and Foreign Trade Minister Mr. Bohumil Urban. He had official talks with his counterpart Mr. Bohuslav Chnoupak. During the talks relations between the two countries were reviewed. Satisfaction was expressed at the smooth progress of bilateral cooperation. It was agreed that special attention will be focussed on expanding and diversifying trade, economic and scientific relations.

The talks also provided an opportunity for exchange of views on regional developments. The Czechoslovak leaders gave their evaluation of the current situation in Europe and EAM acquainted them with developments in our region.

The international situation was also discussed and it was noted that there was identity or close proximity of views on important global issues like peace and disarmament, international economic situation etc.

In Poland, EAM met General Jaruzelski, Chairman of the State Council; Mr. Zbigniew Messner, Chairman of the Council of Ministers; Marshal of the Sejm Mr. Malinowski and held official talks with his counterpart Mr. Marian Orzechowski.

Various aspects of bilateral cooperation were discussed at leangthand both sides noted with satisfaction the progress in Indo-Polish ties. It was decided that more vigorous efforts would be directed towards realising the full potential of bilateral economic cooperation through increased trade and industrial collaboration.

EAM was briefed on current developments in and around Poland as also in Europe. Views were exchanged on major international issues and it was noted with satisfaction that India and Poland shared identical or similar perceptions.

The talks both in Czechoslovakia and Poland were conducted in an atmosphere of warmth and mutual understanding and contributed substantially to furthering the traditional close understanding and friendship between India and these two countries.

(d) No agreement was signed during this visit.

UNCTAD Agreement on Natural Rubber

1008. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:
SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a new international agreement on trading in natural rubber has been signed in the UNCTAD;

(b) if so, what are the details of the agreement; and

(c) how far it will be beneficial to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a) The text of the International Natural Rubber Agreement, 1987, was finalised at the conclusion of the fourth part of the UN Conference on Natural Rubber held under the aegis of UNCTAD from 9—20 March, 1987.

(b) The Agreement mainly aims at price stabilisation. In this connection it provides for an international buffer stock of 5,50,000 tonnes and stipulates the reference price and intervention price levels. The Agreement also envisages measures in the areas of research and development, improvement of productivity, development of end-uses etc.

(c) International price stabilisation is in our interest.

Gangs engaged in fake pass-port rackets

1009. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:
SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether two gangs engaged in fake passport rackets were recently apprehended in the capital by the Delhi Police;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what action Government have taken against the persons arrested in this connection?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) In the first week of March, 1987, the Delhi Police unearthed two different gangs involved in cheating & forgery of passports. One of the two gangs was also involved in the theft of travellers' cheques, passports and credit cards.

Cases under various sections of law have been registered. Four persons have been arrested and a number of documents seized.

Grants-in-Aaid to Tobacco Board

1010. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:
SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh have approached the Central Government for a grants-in-aid to the Tobacco Board to purchase tobacco in Andhra Pradesh so as to help the tobacco growers in that State;

(b) whether the Central Government have since considered the request of the State Government; and

(c) if so, the quantum of grants-in-aid given for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a) to (c) No proposal has been received from the Government of Andhra Pradesh for a grant-in-aid to the Tobacco Board to purchase tobacco in A.P. However, in view of the lesser purchases of tobacco at the auctions platforms in A.P. this year compared to last year, the State Government had requested for immediate purchase of tobacco by the Tobacco Board at the Minimum Support Prices and to direct the State Trading Corporation (STC) to undertake commercial purchase of tobacco.

The Tobacco Board and the STC have already entered the auctions and procured substantial quantity of tobacco. Necessary funds have already been placed at the disposal of the Tobacco Board for the required